

## **CLAIMS**

1. A method for surveying a user, comprising the steps of:
  - presenting at least one question to said user, said at least one question being pertinent in determining at least one affinity group to which said user belongs;
  - creating a user profile for said user based on said user's answers to said at least one question, wherein said user profile is comprised of said at least one question and at least one corresponding answer;
  - adding said user profile to at least one affinity group; and
  - storing said user profile.
2. The method of Claim 1, wherein said question is comprised of a set comprising at least one question group that forms a logical grouping of question fields into a single record.
3. The method of Claim 1, wherein said method further comprises the step of:
  - presenting at least one additional question in response to said at least one question presented to said user.
4. The method of Claim 3, wherein said at least one additional question is presented because of at least one of:
  - popularity of said additional question within said affinity group;
  - as a most frequently answered additional question within said affinity group;
  - as a most recently answered additional question within said affinity group; and
  - with regard to a defined relation to said at least one question.
5. The method of Claim 1, wherein said at least one corresponding answer comprises an open text.
6. The method of Claim 5, wherein said open text allows said user to add a new answer value for said at least one corresponding answer.

7. The method of Claim 6, wherein said new answer is used as one of said respective answers when said at least one question is subsequently posed to a second user.
8. The method of Claim 1, wherein said at least one question comprises at least two possible answers.
9. The method of Claim 8, wherein said user may select more than one answer to said question.
10. The method of Claim 8, wherein said at least two possible answers are presented because of at least one of:
  - popularity of an answer within said affinity group;
  - as a defined relation to said at least one question;
  - as a most frequent answer within said affinity group; and
  - as a most recent answer within said affinity group.
11. The method of Claim 1, wherein said method further comprises the step of:
  - filtering said user's answers to said question.
12. The method of Claim 11, wherein said filtering step is performed in at least one of:
  - real-time; and
  - batch mode.
13. The method of Claim 11, wherein said filtering step further comprises the step of:
  - modifying an answer to said question based on at least one of:
    - predetermined criterion;
    - at least one filtering rule;
    - consistency with previously answered questions;
    - consistency with all answered questions; and
    - consistency with answers of said affinity group.
14. The method of claim 13, wherein said modification comprises at least omission of said answer.

15. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
  - periodically creating a new affinity group; and
  - associating at least one user to said new affinity group.
16. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:
  - a user creating a new affinity group.
17. The method of Claim 16, further comprising the step of:
  - associating matching user profiles with said new affinity group.
18. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:
  - providing a report.
19. The method of Claim 18, wherein generation of said report is constrained by at least one of:
  - an attribute of said user profile; and
  - a reporting goal.
20. The method of Claim 19, wherein said goal comprises at least one of:
  - a profile attribute value;
  - a range of profile attribute values;
  - a Boolean value reflective of a set of values;
  - a Boolean value reflective of a set of non-values;
  - a date range;
  - a minimum count of matching profiles;
  - a maximum count of matching profiles;
  - a question filter;
  - an affinity filter; and
  - a match score threshold.
21. The method of Claim 19, further comprising the step of:
  - weighting said constraints to provide a match score.

22. The method of Claim 19, said step of providing said report comprising the step of:  
    matching between at least a matchfield of said goal and a corresponding matchfield of at least one of:  
        an affinity group; and  
        a user profile.
23. The method of Claim 22, further comprising the step of:  
    determining at least one best match from a plurality of possible matches.
24. The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of:  
    arranging matches by order of match score, said order being grouped to at least two levels of matches, based on said score.
25. The method of Claim 22, said step of matching further comprising the step of:  
    providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and  
    weighting the importance of including said match in said report.
26. The method of Claim 22, said step of matching further comprising the step of:  
    classifying each match score as one of:  
        deterministic to meeting said goal; and  
        non-deterministic to meeting said goal.
27. The method of Claim 19, wherein said goal is any of:  
    a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and  
    an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary inputs.
28. The method of Claim 27, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

29. The method of Claim 27, wherein a report resulting from a personal goal comprises:

- a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:
  - a plurality of user profiles; and
  - an affinity group.

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30. A method for performing a compensation survey of a user, comprising the steps of:

- presenting at least one question to said user to determine at least compensation within an affinity group of said user;

- creating a user profile for said user based on said user's answers to said question, wherein said user profile is comprised of said question and at least one corresponding answer;

- adding said user profile to at least one affinity group;
- storing said user profile.

31. The method of Claim 30, wherein said question is comprised of a set comprising at least one question group forming a logical grouping of question fields into a single record.

32. The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of:

- presenting at least one additional question in response to said at least one question presented to said user.

33. The method of Claim 32, wherein said at least one additional question is presented because of at least one of:

- popularity of said additional question within said affinity group;
- as a most frequently answered additional question within said affinity group;
- as a most recently answered additional question within said affinity group; and
- with regard to a defined relation to said at least one question.

34. The method of Claim 30, wherein said at least a corresponding answer comprises an open text.

35. The method of Claim 34, wherein said open text allows said user to add a new answer value to said at least one corresponding answer.

36. The method of Claim 35, wherein said new answer is used as one of said respective answers when said at least one question is subsequently posed to a second user.

37. The method of Claim 30, wherein said at least one question comprises at least two possible answers.

38. The method of Claim 37, wherein said user may select more than one answer to said question.

39. The method of Claim 37, wherein said at least two possible answers are presented because of at least one of:

- popularity of an answer within said affinity group;
- as a defined relation to said at least one question;
- as a most frequent answer within said affinity group; and
- as a most recent answer within said affinity group.

40. The method of Claim 30, wherein said method further comprises the step of:  
filtering said user's answers to said question.

41. The method of Claim 40, wherein said filtering step is performed in at least one of:  
real-time; and  
batch mode.

42. The method of Claim 40, wherein said filtering step further comprises the step of:  
modifying an answer to said question based on at least one of:  
predetermined criterion;  
at least one filtering rule;  
consistency with previously answered questions;

consistency with all answered questions; and  
consistency with answers of said affinity group.

43. The method of claim 42, wherein said modification comprises at least omission of said answer.

44. The method of Claim 30, further comprising the steps of:  
periodically creating a new affinity group; and  
associating at least one user to said new affinity group.

45. The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of:  
a user creating a new affinity group.

46. The method of Claim 45, further comprising the step of:  
associating matching user profiles with said new affinity group.

47. The method of Claim 30, wherein said affinity group comprises at least one of:  
profession;  
geographic location;  
compensation;  
compensation range;  
experience;  
experience range;  
position; and  
position range.

48. The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of:  
providing a compensation report.

49. The method of Claim 48, said compensation report is constrained by at least one of:  
an attribute of said user profile; and  
a reporting goal.

50. The method of Claim 49, further comprising the step of:  
weighting said constraint to provide a match score.
51. The method of Claim 49, said goal comprising at least one of:  
a desired compensation;  
a desired range of compensation;  
a desired geographic location;  
a desired firm; and  
a desired range of firms.
52. The method of Claim 49, said step of providing said report, comprising the step of:  
matching between at least a matchfield of said goal and a corresponding  
matchfield of at least one of:  
an affinity group; and  
a user profile.
53. The method of Claim 52 further comprising the step of:  
determining at least one best match from a plurality of possible matches.
54. The method of Claim 53, further comprising the step of:  
arranging matches by order of match score, said order being grouped to at least  
two levels of matches, based on said score.
55. The method of Claim 52, said step of matching further comprising the steps of:  
providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and  
weighting the importance of including said match in said report.
56. The method of claim 55, said step of matching further comprising the step of:  
classifying each match score as one of:  
deterministic to meeting said goal; and  
non-deterministic to meeting said goal.



57. The method of Claim 49, said goal comprising any of:

a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and

an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary inputs.

58. The method of Claim 57, said personal goal comprising at least one of:

compensation;

compensation range;

salary;

salary range;

geographic location;

position; and

position range.

59. The method of Claim 57, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

60. The method of Claim 59, wherein said statistical information comprises at least one of:

average compensation;

average salary;

median compensation;

median salary;

salary percentile;

standard deviation;

trend;

profile count;

most frequent compensation; and

most frequent salary.

61. The method of Claim 57, said report resulting from said personal goal providing a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:

- a plurality of user profiles; and
- an affinity group.

62. The method of Claim 30, said compensation comprising at least one of:

- annual salary;
- monthly salary;
- weekly salary;
- hourly rate;
- bonus;
- tip;
- benefits; and
- vacation time.

63. An apparatus for compensation surveying and reporting, comprising:

- means for accessing a Web site, said Web site being accessible via a network;
- means for surveying a user for information pertinent for determination of compensation;
- means for creating a user profile for said user based on gathering of said information, said user profile further comprised of at least one question and at least one corresponding answer;
- means for storing said user profile;
- means for at least periodically generating at least an affinity group comprising a plurality of user profiles; and
- means for matching an attribute of said user profile with at least one affinity group.

64. The apparatus of Claim 63, further comprising:

- means for selecting at least one affinity group to which said user profile best matches.

65. The apparatus of Claim 63, wherein said network is at least one of:

a local area network (LAN);  
a wide area network (WAN);  
an Intranet;;  
the Internet; and  
the World Wide Web.

66. The apparatus of Claim 63, further comprising:

means for reporting results based on a reporting goal.

67. The apparatus of Claim 66, said means for reporting are further comprising

means for matching between at least a matchfield of said goal and a  
corresponding matchfield of at least one of:

an affinity group; and  
a user profile.

68. The apparatus of Claim 67, said means for matching further comprising:

means for classifying each match score as one of:  
deterministic to meeting said goal; and  
non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

69. The apparatus of Claim 66, said reporting goal comprising at least one of:

salary range;  
hourly rate range;  
billing rate;  
vacation range;  
commission range;  
stock option packages;  
tips;  
benefits comparison; and  
total compensation calculations.

70. The apparatus of Claim 63, said affinity group comprising at least one of:

industry;

job;  
profession;  
geographic location;  
compensation range;  
experience range;  
skill, certification;  
responsibility;  
employer name;  
employer type;  
employer size;  
employer sales;  
employer business;  
employer product;  
employer service;  
gender;  
age range;  
school name;  
degree;  
study major; and  
ethnic background.

71. The apparatus of Claim 63, said compensation comprising at least one of:

annual salary;  
monthly salary;  
weekly salary;  
daily rate;  
hourly rate;  
overtime rate;  
bonus;  
tip;  
benefits;  
vacation time;  
stock; and

stock options.

72. The apparatus of Claim 66, wherein said reporting goal comprises one of:

a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and

an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary inputs.

73. The apparatus of Claim 72, said personal goal comprising at least one of:

compensation;

compensation range;

salary;

salary range;

geographic location;

job position; and

statistical information.

74. The apparatus of Claim 73, said personal goal in connection with said user profile comprising:

likes of said user.

75. The apparatus of Claim 73, said personal goal in connection with said affinity group comprising:

a user profile comprising likes of said user.

76. The apparatus of Claim 66, wherein said reporting goal provides aggregated information pertaining to a plurality of user profiles.

77. The apparatus of Claim 76, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

78. The apparatus of Claim 77, said statistical information comprising at least one of:

average compensation;

average salary;  
median compensation;  
median salary;  
salary percentile;  
standard deviation;  
trend;  
profile count;  
most frequent compensation; and  
most frequent salary.

79. The apparatus of Claim 63, said means for surveying further comprising:  
means for suggesting at least a question from a plurality of survey questions.

80. The apparatus of Claim 79, said question is associated with a plurality of possible answers.

81. The apparatus of Claim 80, wherein said possible answers are a subset of a plurality of answers, wherein said subset being selected at least in respect of said user profile.

82. The apparatus of Claim 81, wherein said user may select at least one answer to said question.

83. The apparatus of Claim 81, said possible answers further comprising:  
an open text.

84. The apparatus of Claim 83, said open text allowing said user to add a new answer to said possible answers.

85. The apparatus of Claim 84, wherein said new answer is used as one of said possible answers when a question is subsequently suggested to a second user.

86. The apparatus of Claim 81, wherein a subsequent question is selected from a plurality of possible questions.

87. The apparatus of Claim 86, wherein said selection from a plurality of possible question is tailored to correspond with said user profile.

88. The apparatus of Claim 81, wherein upon selection of an answer by said user, said user profile is associated with an affinity group.

89. The apparatus of Claim 79, wherein said means for surveying enable said user to add a new question.

90. The apparatus of Claim 89, wherein said user may add a new answer to said question.

91. The apparatus of Claim 63, wherein said affinity groups are created based on at least a commonality between at least one attribute and at least one corresponding value.

92. A method for surveying, comprising the steps of:

- asking a first question from a user;

- receiving an answer from said user;

- storing said first question and said answer in a user profile respective of said user;

- adding said user profile to at least one matching affinity group;

- optionally filtering said answer based on said user profile and said at least one affinity group;

- modifying said answer if it is inconsistent with at least one of:

- said user profile; and

- said affinity group;

- determining an appropriate next question to be presented to said user; and

- repeating the foregoing steps until a full profile is established.

93. The method of claim 92, further comprising the steps of:  
at least periodically checking all user profiles; and  
generating at least an affinity group, wherein said affinity group comprises at least a user profile.
94. The method of Claim 92, further comprising the step of:  
preparing a report based on at least one of:  
an attribute of said user profile; and  
a reporting goal.
95. The method of Claim 92, wherein said step of optionally filtering said answer is performed in an off-line mode.
96. The method of Claim 92, wherein said appropriate next question is determined based on at least one of:  
popularity of said question within said affinity group;  
a defined relation to said at least one question;  
a most frequently answered question within said affinity group;  
a most recently answered question within said affinity group; and  
in relation to said question.
97. The method of Claim 94, further comprising the step of:  
querying any of a database of a plurality of user profiles and a database of a plurality of affinity groups for a statistical report.
98. The method of Claim 97, wherein said statistical report comprises at least one of:  
average compensation;  
average salary;  
median compensation;  
median salary;  
salary percentile;  
standard deviation;  
trend;



profile count;  
most frequent compensation; and  
most frequent salary.

99. The method of Claim 98, further comprising the step of:

generating said statistical report with at least one of said attributes held constant.

100. The method of Claim 94, said generating step further comprising the step of:

constraining by at least one of:

an attribute of said user profile; and  
a goal.

101. The method of Claim 100, wherein said goal comprises at least one of:

a profile attribute value;  
a range of profile attribute values;  
a Boolean value reflective of a set of values;  
a Boolean value reflective of a set of non-values;  
a date range, a minimum count of matching profiles;  
a maximum count of matching profiles;  
a question filter;  
an affinity filter; and  
a match score threshold.

102. The method of Claim 100, further comprising the step of:

weighting said constraint results to provide a match score.

103. The method of Claim 100, further comprising the step of:

determining a best match from a plurality of possible matches.

104. The method of Claim 103, further comprising the step of:

arranging said match by order of match score, said order being grouped to at least two levels of matches, based on said score.

105. The method of Claim 100, said matching step further comprising the steps of:  
providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and  
weighting the importance of including said match in said report.

106. The method of Claim 100, said step of matching to said affinity group further comprising the step of:  
classifying each match score as one of:  
deterministic to meeting said goal; and  
non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

107. The method of Claim 100, said goal comprising one of:  
a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and  
an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary inputs.

108. The method of Claim 107, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

109. The method of Claim 108, wherein said statistical information comprises at least one of:  
average compensation;  
average salary;  
median compensation;  
median salary;  
salary percentile;  
standard deviation;  
trend;  
profile count;  
most frequent compensation; and

most frequent salary.

110. The method of Claim 107, wherein a report resulting from a personal goal provides a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:

a plurality of user profiles; and

an affinity group.